

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1 and 31, and cancel claims 15-20 as reflected in the following complete listing of the claims and their current status:

1. (Currently amended) A dynamic stabilization system for stabilization of a spine, comprising:

a stabilization element configured to span between at least two vertebrae of the spine and defining a longitudinal axis along the length of said element:

at least two bone anchors, each having a bone engagement portion; and
at least two connectors for connecting a corresponding one of said bone anchors to said stabilization element, at least one connector including;

a bearing member attached to said stabilization element;

a compressible flexible element supported within said bearing member with said bone anchor extending through said flexible element, said flexible element contacting said bearing member substantially along said longitudinal axis of said stabilization element to permit relative pivoting between said corresponding bone anchor and said stabilization element, said flexible element being configured to expand along said longitudinal axis as said element is compressed; and

an adjustment element ~~for adjusting~~ configured to compress said flexible element to thereby adjust the flexibility of said flexible element.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 1, wherein:

said stabilization element includes an elongated spinal rod;
said bearing member is a rod end bearing including a rod engagement portion; and
said flexible element is a bearing element of said rod end bearing.

4. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 3, wherein:
said bearing element is received within a bearing race of said rod end bearing; and
said adjustment element is arranged to compress said bearing element within said bearing race.

5. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 3, wherein said rod engagement portion includes a bore for receiving a portion of said spinal rod therein and a set screw for clamping said spinal rod within said bore.

6. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 1, wherein:
at least one of said bone anchors includes a stem having a threaded portion;
said flexible element includes a bore for receiving said stem therethrough; and
said adjustment element includes a nut engaging said threaded portion and arranged to compress said flexible element as said nut is threaded onto said threaded portion.

7. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 6, wherein said at least one of said bone anchors includes an intermediate portion between said stem and said bone engagement portion, said intermediate portion configured to support said flexible element so that said flexible element is compressed between said intermediate portion and said nut when said nut is threaded onto said threaded portion.

8. (Original) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 1, wherein another of said connectors is configured to substantially rigidly connect one of said bone anchors to said stabilization element.

Claims 9 – 14 (Cancelled)

Claims 15 - 20 (Cancelled)

Claims 21 – 30 (Cancelled)

31. (Currently amended) The dynamic stabilization system according to claim 4 ~~15~~, wherein:

said flexible element has a substantially spherical outer surface; and

said bearing race defines a substantially spherical inner surface engaging said outer surface of said flexible element.